

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-13 /077 W  
-----181205Z 059394 /13  
R 180700Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6474  
INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ALGIERS 1240

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT AG  
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN CABINET RESHUFFLE: BOUMEDIENE TIGHTENS  
HIS HOLD

REF: ALGIERS 1019, B. ALGIERS 1076

1. SUMMARY: ALGERIAN CABINET RESHUFFLE REFLECTS ABOVE  
ALL BOUMEDIENE'S POLITICAL CAUTION. THUS, CHANGES  
WERE LONG TIME IN COMING AND NO VICE PRESIDENT OR PRIME  
MINISTER NAMED. BEYOND THIS, COUNCIL OF THE REVOLUTION  
AND INDUSTRY AND ENERGY CZAR ABDESSELAM ALMOST CERTAINLY  
DOWNGRADED, AND ROLE OF MILITARY SLIGHTLY INCREASED.  
ALTHOUGH IT CONTAINS SOME STRONG PERSONALITIES, THE NEW  
CABINET'S BASIC ORIENTATION IS SIMILAR TO ITS PREDECESSOR'S  
AND ITS SUBORDINATION TO BOUMEDIENE HAS INCREASED. END SUMMARY

2. IN TWO-WEEK INTERVAL SINCE NAMING OF NEW ALGERIAN  
CABINET, THERE HAVE BEEN NO STARTLING REVELATIONS OR  
INDICATIONS AS TO DEEPER POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF  
RESHUFFLE. CABINET SAID TO BE HARD AT WORK AT BRINGING  
PRICES AND WAGES INTO LINE. EXTENT TO WHICH THIS EFFORT TO  
ACHIEVE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM PRODUCES ANYTHING CONCRETE  
WILL BE PRELIMINARY INDICATOR OF NEW GROUP'S WORTH.  
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3. AS WE AWAIT FURTHER RETURNS, WE OFFER FOLLOWING COMMENTS  
ON RESHUFFLE:

4. CAUTION ABOVE ALL ELSE: POLITICAL CAUTION, BOUMEDIENE'S  
STOCK IN TRADE, GOVERNED WAY IN WHICH RESHUFFLE HANDLED.  
FIRST, ALTHOUGH FAILURE TO NAME VICE

PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER HAS AROUSED MUCH SPECULATION ABOUT WARRING FACTIONS WITHIN REGIME, WE SUSPECT BOUMEDIENE SIMPLY NOT READY FOR SUCH MOVE. PAST DECADE HAS SEEN HIM SLOWLY CONSOLIDATE POLITICAL POWER AND FROW IN CONFIDENCE, AND OUR BELIEF IS THAT HE INTENDS TO CONTINUE TO MOVE SLOWLY. SPECULATION NOW IS THAT VP AND/OR PM WILL NOT BE NAMED UNTIL AFTER FLN CONGRESS, NOW SCHEDULED FOR 1978.

5. BOUMEDIENE ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE EXERCISED EXTREME CAUTION IN HANDLING RESHUFFLE ITSELF. RUMORS ABOUT WHO WAS GOING WHERE AND WHY CIRCULATING FOR SOME MONTHS PRIOR TO FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS. WE TEND TO AGREE WITH ONE NEWS MAGAZINE ASSESSMENT THAT SOME OF THIS TALK REPRESENTED TRIAL BALLOONS FLOATED BY REGIME. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT, IN ABSENCE OF POLITICAL LEADERS WITH DEFINABLE BASES OF SUPPORT IN COUNTRYSIDE, POLITICS HERE IS PROCESS OF INTERACTION OF VARIOUS CLIQUES, AND WORKING OUT OF NECESSARY DEALS HAS BEEN TIME-CONSUMING AND HANDLED WITH CARE. INDIVIDUALS BEING EASED OUT ARE GIVEN TIME TO REALIZE THEY MUST GO AND THEN THEY GO VOLUNTARILY, RATHER THAN BEING UNCEREMONIOUSLY BOOTED OUT.

6. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT AGREE WITH SOME THAT LACK OF SPECTACULAR CHANGE MEANS THAT RESHUFFLE INSIGNIFICANT. WE SEE IN IT SOME ELEMENTS OF GRAND DESIGN AS WELL AS SOME PERSONALITY SHIFTS WORTHY OF NOTE. IN FORMER CATEGORY ARE:

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7. DOWNGRADING OF COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION: OUR CONTRACTS HERE ARE VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS IN VIEW THAT REMOVAL OF COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION MEMBERS DRAIA AND BENCHERIF FROM THEIR PARA-MILITARY COMMANDS REPRESENTS DEMOTION FOR BOTH AND DOWNGRADING OF COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION.

8. BOUNCIL HAS BECOME EVEN MORE CEREMONIAL THAN PREVIOUSLY. ONLY TWO OF ITS MEMBERS, FIRST AND SECOND MILITARY REGION COMMANDERS BELHOUCHE AND CHADLY, NOW HAVE SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF ARMED MEN DIRECTLY UNDER THEIR CONTROL, ALTHOUGH ABDELGHANI STILL OCCUPIES KEY SECURITY POST. COUNCIL HAS NOT MET BY ITSELF SINCE IT CONSIDERED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE LISTS EARLY THIS YEAR, AND WE NOTE THAT OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF LAST GOVERNMENT MEETING REFERRED ONLY TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, RATHER THAN COUNCILS OF REVOLUTION AND MINISTERS AS HAD BEEN CUSTOMARY OVER PAST TWO YEARS. SPECULATION IS THAT COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION WILL DISAPPEAR ENTIRELY FOLLOWING FLN CONGRESS AND THAT SOME OF ITS

MEMBERS MAY BE PLACED ON HIGH SECURITY COUNCIL, WHICH  
REGIME HAS ANNOUNCED WILL BE NAMED SOON.

9. DEMOTION OF ABDESSELAM: AS WE HAVE NOTED PREVIOUSLY,  
SECOND MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN CABINET RESHUFFLE WAS  
PARTITION OF FORMER INDUSTRY AND ENERGY MINISTER ABDESSELAM'S  
EMPIRE AND HIS RELEGATION TO WHAT WOULD SEEM TO BE LEAST  
IMPORTANT OF THREE PORTFOLIOS CREATED, THAT OF LIGHT  
INDUSTRY. WE CONTINUE TO HEAR ARGUMENTS THAT HE  
WILL REMAIN COCK OF THE WALK; LATEST IS LOCAL LE MONDE  
CORRESPONDENT'S CONTENTION THAT LIGHT INDUSTRY IS  
LARGEST INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN COUNTRY AND THAT PROPOSED  
AUTO INDUSTRY WILL BE PART OF ABDESSELAM'S PORTFOLIO.  
WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT ABDESSELAM CAME A XROPPER  
IN SOME WAY, PERHAPS BY SEEKING TOO MUCH POWER AND  
BEING CUT DOWN BY A RIVAL SUCH AS BOUTEFLIKA, OR  
PERHAPS AS SCAPEGOAT FOR POOR INDUSTRIAL PERFORM-  
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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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R 180700Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6475  
INFO AMEMBASY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ALGIERS 1240

10. THERE ARE ALREADY INDICATIONS THAT ABDESSELAM'S  
DOWNFALL IS REAL. BEST IS HIS FAILURE TO RECEIVE  
CLARK CLIFFORD DURING LATTER'S ANNUAL VISIT TO ALGIERS  
EARLIER THIS MONTH EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HE WHO EXTENDED

INVITATION TO CLIFFORD TO COME HERE AND WHO HAS DOMINATED CLIFFORD'S VISITS HERE FOR PAST SEVEN YEARS. MORE CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE WILL COME WHEN ALGERIA SENDS ITS NEXT DELEGATION TO AN INTERNATIONAL ENERGY CONFERENCE SUCH AS AN OPEC MEETING.

11. IN NEW SITUATION, RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY WILL BE MORE DIFFUSE, WITH BOUMEDIENE HIMSELF MORE DEXPOSED. ENERGY AND HEAVY INDUSTRIES MINISTERS GHOZALI AND LIASSINE ARE INTELLIGENT, COMPETENT MEN WITH LONG EXPERIENCE IN THEIR FIELDS. (LIASSINE, IN PARTICULAR, IS REFERRED TO IN HUSHED TONES BECAUSE HE IS ONLY PRE-INDEPENDENCE ALGERIAN GRADUATE OF FRENCH ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE.) UNTIL NOW, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE BEEN ABDESSELAM PROTEGES AND LEG MEN. GHOZALI, FOR ONE, SEEMS TO BE HAVING DIFFICULTY ABANDONING FORMER, SUBORDINATE ROLE; CLIFFORD SPOKE WITH HIM DURING HIS VISIT AND FOUND HIM UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO DISCUSS ALGERIA'S ENERGY POLICY WITH ANY AUTHORITY.

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12. MILITARY PRESENCE SLIGHTLY INCREASED: NUMBER OF MEN WITH MILITARY BACKGROUND IN CABINET HAS INCREASED FROM SIX TO NINE. OF THREE NEW OFFICERS IN CABINET, TWO - HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION MINISTER LT COLONEL AOUCHICHE AND POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS MINISTER COLONEL ZERGUINI, ARE REGULAR ARMY MEN. THIRD, LABOR MINISTER COLONEL AMIR, IS MEDICAL DOCTOR WHO HAS NOT SERVED IN A MILITARY POSITION FOR SOME YEARS.

13. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT INFLUENCE OF MILITARY HAS GROWN AS RESULT OF CHANGE. ALTHOUGH MINISTRIES RECEIVING MILITARY MEN ARE IMPORTANT, THEY OPERATE IN AREAS IN WHICH MILITARY ALREADY WAS PLAYING MAJOR ROLE. CHANGES WILL, WE BELIEVE, INVOLVE ARMY EVEN MORE IN CIVIC ACTION THAN IT HAS BEEN TO DATE, AND ALSO REPRESENT EFFORT TO BRING IN SOME MILITARY DISCIPLINE TO SHAPE UP MINISTRIES.

14. FINALLY, WE OFFER FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUALS MINISTERS:

A. HEALTH MINISTER AIT MESSAOUDENE: THIS APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN WIDELY PRAISED DESPITE AIT MESSAOUDENE'S UNFAMILIARITY WITH MEDICINE. AIT MESSAOUDENE IS FORMER AIR FORCE PILOT WHO WAS BIG SUCCESS AS PRESIDENT OF AIR ALGERIE AND AS MINISTER OF POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS BEFORE TAKING PRESIDENT JOB. EMBOFF WHO ATTENDED MEETING WITH HIM ON U.S.-ALGERIAN COOPERATION IN FIELD OF MEDICINE WAS IMPRESSED WITH HIS INTELLIGENCE AND QUICK GRASP OF

ESSENTIALS OF SUBJECTS BEING DISCUSSED.

B. LABOR MINISTER AMIR: AMIR KNOWN AS TOUGH ADMINISTRATOR AND MAY BE EXPECTED TO ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE GREATER DISCIPLINE INTO SOMETIMES EBULLIENT ALGERIAN LABOR FORCE. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT STRIKES HAVE INCREASED OF LATE AND THAT OFFICIAL TRADE UNION NOT ON TOP OF SITUATION.  
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C. JUSTICE MINISTER BENHABYLES: BENHABYLES IS BELIEVED BY SOME SOURCES TO BE BOUMEDIENE'S SECOND -- IF NOT LATER -- CHOICE FOR JUSTICE POST AFTER FORMER INFORMATION MINISTER TALEB IBRAHIMI HAD REFUSED JOB. BENHABYLES IS MILD-MANNERED NON-IDEOLOGICAL DIPLOMAT WHO DOES NOT APPEAR WELL SUITED FOR DIFFICULT TASK OF INTRODUCING EFFICIENCY INTO REPORTEDLY CHAOTIC JUSTICE SYSTEM. HOWEVER, ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE BELIEVES BENHABYLES MAY BE WILLING TO LOOK AT SITUATION MORE REALISTICALLY THAN HIS MORE ZEALOUSLY SOCIALIST PREDECESSORS, PERHAPS REVISING SOME PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE NOT WORKED OUT WELL.

D. AT SUB-CABINET LEVEL WE NOTE CONTINUED ADVANCEMENT OF TWO PRESIDENCY OFFICIALS: SMAIL HAMDANI, WHO APPARENTLY WIELDS EVEN WIDER POWER AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT THAN HE DID AS DEPUTY PRESIDENCY SECRETARY GENERAL; AND LT COL ALAHOUM WHO CONTINUES HIS RAPID RISE BY TAKING OVER AS PRESIDENCY SECRETARY GENERAL.

15. IN SHORT, STORY OF THIS CHANGE HAS BEEN DOWNGRADING OF ABDESSELAM AND COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION. BEYOND THIS, IT IS RESHUFFLE OF MORE-OR-LESS LIKE-MINDED PERSONS INCREASINGLY SUBORDINATE TO BOUMEDIENE. LYNE

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## Message Attributes

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